Threat to life of people of Indian origin in Fiji

2089. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that persons of Indian origins living in Fiji Island are living under constant threat;

(b) if so, whether Government have taken up the matter with Commonwealth members; and

(c) what steps are contemplated to protect life and property of those Indians living in Fiji?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) Yes, Sir. Fijians of Indian origin are facing isolation and hardship as a result of the recent crisis.

(b) The matter has been taken up bilaterally with Commonwealth members Australia, United Kingdom and New Zealand and with the Secretary General of the Commonwealth.

(c) In all our interventions in bilateral and multilateral fora, India's effort is on resumption of the democratic process and restoration of a lawfully constituted Government and racial harmony in Fiji. In our opinion, the 1997 Constitution of Fiji provided an appropriate framework for these ends.

Threat to life and property to Indian in Sierra Leone

2090. SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the reports about the threat of life and property of Indians in Sierra Leone, particularly the special report captioned "Captive in Freetown" published in the Indian Express of 2nd July, 2000.

(b) if so, the number of Indians in Sierra Leone and how many of them have fled to India; and

(c) the steps taken to ensure the security of life and property of these NRIs?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Presently there are approximately 190 Indians in Sierra Leone. Though it is learnt that some Indians, especially women and children have left the country, so far there is no record of any of them coming to India.

(c) The overall responsibility to ensure security of life and property of foreigners in Sierra Leone lies with the host government. Our Mission in Abidjan which is concurrently accredited to Sierra Leone is constantly monitoring the situation in that country through our Honorary Consul there and will do every thing possible to ensure the safety of Indian in Sierra Leone.

Purulia arms drop case

†2091. SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of people together with the details of nationality of each sentenced in Purulia arms drop case;

(b) whether Government have decided to set some of them free;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the step Government is considering to take in regard to the remaining convicts?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) Six persons were sentenced to imprisonment for life in the Purulia arms drop case. Five were Latvian nationals of Russian origin and the sixth was a British national. During the course of the trial, the five Latvian nationals were granted Russian citizenship.

(b) and (c) The Russian leadership had at various levels raised the issue of pardon/clemency for the pilots. The family members of the crew had appealed for mercy. The State Duma of the Russian Federation (Lower House of the Russian Parliament) had adopted

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.